



**The Islamic Veil, a Symbol of Segregation
of Women**

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President of the

**"Ligue du Droit International des
Femmes"**

Gothenburg, Friday 7th March 2008

Two Main Actions

1- Against the offence to men's and women's dignity in public areas - A citizen's address to the French authorities

■ Why should we accept, in public areas:

- Little girls wearing the veil ?
- Women wrapped up in a burka that wholly conceals them ?
- Female students in the University and Education Colleges wearing the veil ?

2- Against women segregation in sports: a universal value - A message to the International Olympic Committee

■ Sports: an Universal value

Why should Islamic countries practising institutionalised segregation against women be allowed to participate in the Olympics, in contradiction with the Olympic Charter ?

The citizen's address to the French authorities

- In public areas more and more little girls and in under age are wearing the veil. More and more women are wrapped up in a burka that wholly conceals them.
- These women attack all of men's and women's dignity.
- Last October a law court in Epinal (western France) gave a suspended prison sentence for “religious discrimination” to the landlady of a guest house who had asked her Muslim guests to take off their veil, symbol of the oppression of women in the shared areas.
- Tolerating women to conceal themselves in public areas seriously contravenes the constitutional equality between men and women.
- The 2004 Law forbidding religious signs in schools which has made possible to protect little girls and girls in their teens at schools is showing its limits. **It ought to be extended to universities and to any other education space.**
- **The 2004 Law ought to be extended to public areas for little girls, and regarding outfits which wholly conceal women, such as burkas.**
- First signatories : Michèle Vianès, Chairwoman of Regards de Femmes, Anne Zelensky, Chairwoman of the Ligue du Droit des Femmes, Annie Sugier, Chairwoman of the Ligue du Droit International des Femmes, Pierre Cassen, editor of the online paper Riposte Laïque.



The "Ligue du Droit International des Femmes" and the Olympic Games

**Twenty Years of History
1992 - 2008**

A specialized NGO set up in 1992 - The Committee ATLANTA +

Gothenburg, Friday 7th March 2008

Sports: an Universal Value

- Olympic Games' history shows the symbolic force of sports :

- for self reliance and the pleasure of victory
- as a powerful means of expression for oppressed groups.



[The Olympic Charter]

- « All forms of discrimination with respect to a country or a person, whether for reasons of race, religion, politics, sex or any other, are incompatible with the Olympic movement. »

[The Olympic Charter]

- The oath which the members of the I.O.C. take is as follows:

«I accept the honour to be part of the I.O.C. and to represent the I.O.C. in my country... And I declare myself conscious of the responsibilities which are therefore incumbent upon me. I commit myself to serve the Olympic movement in all ways within my means, to respect and to make respected all provisions of the Olympic Charter and the decisions of I.O.C. which I consider to be irreversible, to remain foreign to any political or commercial influence as well as to any consideration of race or religion.»

Political Dimension of the Olympics

- No one has forgotten the impact of:
 - 1936 – Berlin - The Black athlete Jesse Owen's victory in Berlin in Hitler's presence
 - 1968 – Mexico - The raised fist of the two US Black athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos to denounce racial discrimination
 - Boycotts of Olympic Games for political reasons (Montreal, Moscow, Los Angeles...)
- A historical decision of I.O.C.
 - 1968 - Exclusion of South Africa's National Olympic committee because of racial apartheid



Foundation of Atlanta+

- Creating Atlanta+ was decided in 1992 during the Barcelona Olympic Games. The entire world was celebrating the end of apartheid and the return of South Africa among olympic nations.



First Discovery: Discrimination and Segregation affecting sports women

- However at the same time another sort of discrimination was displayed under our very eyes, but which no one appeared to notice: 35 delegations were composed exclusively of men.



[Why ?]

- The reasons given by I.O.C. to justify the absence of women are unacceptable:
 - preference given to male athletes in countries of limited economic means (i.e. ordinary discrimination)
 - religious and cultural reasons (i.e. institutionalised segregation)

Atlanta+ Objectives

- Atlanta+ objectives are to make it possible for female athletes in all countries to participate in the Olympic games, whatever their cultural or religious tradition, just like male athletes.

“I offer this medal to all of the women in the world who suffer like me and specially to Algerian women.”



Barcelone 92 - Hassiba Boulmerka (Algérie) – 1500 m

Second Discovery: Separate games for Muslim women

- They are called the "Solidarity games" and take place every four years like the Olympics... They were first organised in Teheran and presented as a model for the free women of the world. Moreover I.O.C sent observers at these games who wore the headscarf!



[Solidarity games]

Teheran, February 1993

The First Solidarity Games for women of Islamic



Solidarity Games

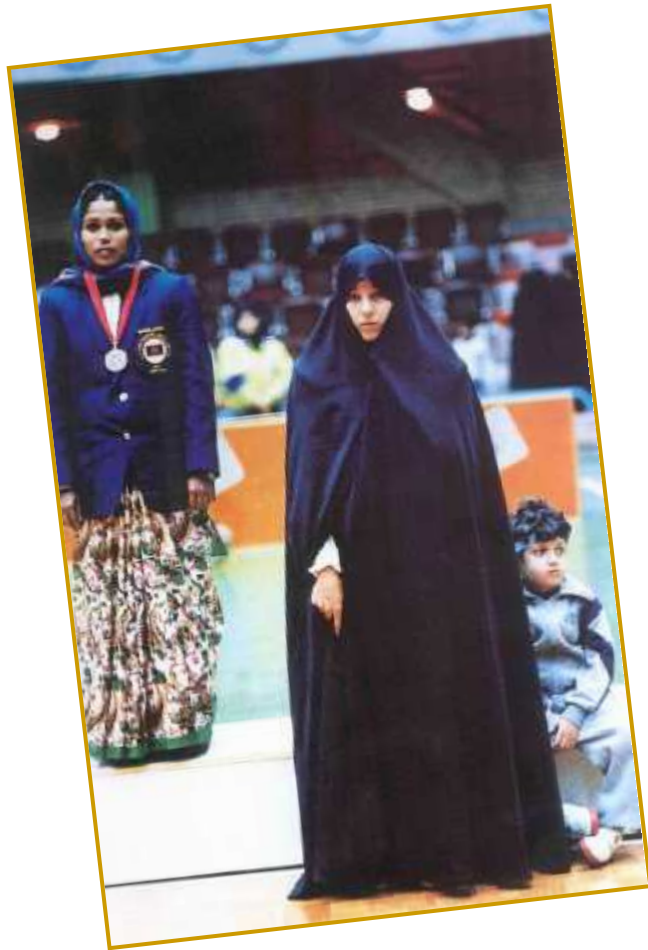
■ Faïza HACHIMI, daughter of the President of the Islamic Republic in 1993, was the President of the Solidarity Games, and made the following statement:

“I hope these games will serve as a pattern for the free women in the world.”

She is now the Iranian NOC's Vice President.



Solidarity Games



- The only events open to men, were the opening and the medals awarding ceremonies.

Islamic rules against IOC rules

Excerpts from the speech delivered by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Opening Ceremony

- Muslims should be careful that women do not get involved with undesirable consequences of such sports and on the other hand we should do our best to fulfil their needs.
- We have initiated such issue by calling together in this Congress experts from the Islamic countries and those individuals who have belief in preserving the purity of women and in the teachings of Islam, to prevent the corruption which may result from simultaneous presence of men and women athletes in one and the same arena.

[I.O.C. Observers (women)]

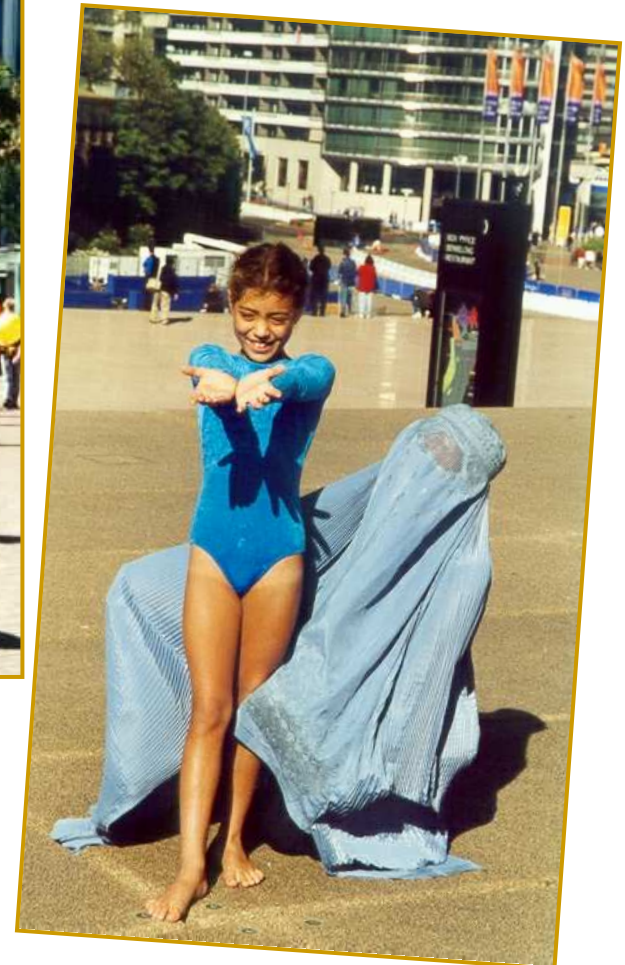
- I.O.C. observers were invited to the Solidarity Games and gave a favourable opinion without realizing that they were approving women's segregation.



[Atlanta+ actions]

- Atlanta + demands that, as was done for South Africa, the I.O.C. refuses to allow the participation in the Olympic Games of those countries which exclude women.
- At each Olympic Games following Barcelona, the association was present to make pressure on I.O.C. and put shame on the countries excluding women.

[Atlanta+ actions]



In Sydney, Atlanta+ came with three Afghans (two females and one male) and had a thorough discussion with high level I.O.C. representatives.

Atlanta+ actions

For the first time, Atlanta+ meets with the new President of I.O.C. but to no avail

Bruxelles, 17th February 2004



Atlanta+ actions

In Athens, a photography of the Atlanta+ delegation near the Melina Mercouri monument.



Athens: a treason

At the closing Ceremony the President of IOC has invited a woman wearing a veil.



[The Impact of Atlanta+ Campaign]

- Evolution of the number of delegations without women.

○ 1992 – Barcelona	35	} delegations without women
○ 1996 – Atlanta	26	
○ 2000 – Sydney	9	
○ 2004 – Athens	9	


mainly Islamic countries: the hard core

Challenges

- With the intrusion of the so called “Islamic values” all around the world, one should consider the Olympic Games as an opportunity to underline that such an ideology means the exclusion of women.



Barcelone 92 – Derartu Tulu (Ethiopie) – 1000m



Thank you for your attention !